

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 DPW-01 IO-03 EUR-10 NSC-10 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5529

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14049

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: MR IV SITREP FOR AUGUST 3, 1973

THE FOLLOWING SENT SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO 03 AUG 73
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION AND INFO. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0627

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: MR IV SITREP FOR AUGUST 3, 1973

SUMMARY: A FAIRLY HIGH LEVEL OF VIET CONG- INITIATED
ACTIVITY CONTINUES, ESPECIALLY IN CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE,
DESPITE THE APPARENT CESSATION OF LARGE-SCALE ARVN
OPERATIONS IN THAT AREA. THE RECENT MURDER OF A HOA HAO
LEADER POINTS UP THE CONTINUED DISUNITY OF THE SECT AND
SHOWS A NEW GVN CAPACITY TO DEAL FORCEFULLY WITH HOA HAO
INFRACTIONS OF THE PEACE. END SUMMARY.

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1. SECURITY SITUATION:

(A) VIET CONG MILITARY ACTIVITY CONTINUED DURING AUGUST 1 AND 2 AT THE RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF LATE JULY. CHUONG THIEN CONTINUES AS THE PRINCIPLE AREA OF ACTION, DESPITE REDUCED GVN ACTIVITY THERE (CAN THO 0619), MR IV REPORTED 24 VC-INITIATED INCIDENTS ON AUGUST 1, INCLUDING 13 ATTACKS BY FIRE, 7 HARASSMENTS, 2 GROUND ATTACKS AND 2 ACTS OF TERRORISM. ONE HELICOPTER WAS DAMAGED BY GROUND FIRE. THERE WERE FIVE INCIDENTS IN EACH OF CHUONG THIEN, KIEN HOA, AND DINH TUONG PROVINCES. NINE GVN TROOPS WERE KILLED AND 83 WOUNDED. IV CORPS CLAIMS 78 VC KILLED, ONE CAPTURED, AND TWO SUSPECTED VC CAPTURED. ONE VC CREW-SERVED WEAPON AND 19 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS WERE CAPTURED. FOR AUGUST 2, CORPS REPORTED 35 VC-INITIATED INCIDENTS, INCLUDING TWO GROUND ATTACKS, 27 ATTACKS BY FIRE, THREE HARASSMENTS, AND TWO ACTS OF TERROR. 20 OF THE 35 INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE IN CHUONG THIEN. 15 GVN TROOPS WERE KILLED, 83 WOUNDED, 5 MISSING, AND TWO

CIVILIANS MISSING. ELEVEN INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS WERE LOST. CORPS CLAIMS 63 VC KILLED AND TWO SUSPECTED VC CAPTURED.

2. SELECTED PROVINCE COMMENT: (A) THE BA XUYEN PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS THE SECOND SUCCESSFUL VC ATTACK ON A PF OUTPOST IN TWO WEEKS. THE 21 MAN BASE LOST 21 M16 RIFLES, ONE M79 GRENADE LAUNCHER, AND TWO RADIOS. FIVE PF WERE KILLED, TEN WOUNDED, AND THREE WERE MISSING. THE GVN CLAIMED FOUR VC KILLED AND TWO RIFLES CAPTURED. IN A SEPARATE GVN-INITIATED OPERATION, THE BA XUYEN INTELLIGENCE SQUAD (WHOSE FUNCTION IT IS TO REACT QUICKLY TO INTELLIGENCE) SUCCESSFULLY AMBUSHED A VC PLATOON, KILLING TWO AND CAPTURING ONE WEAPON, WITH NO GVN CASUALTIESS.

(B) VINH BINH PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS THAT THE NEW PROVINCE CHIEF, LTC CAO TAN HAP, APPEARS TO ENJOY STRONGER LOCAL POLITICAL SUPPORT THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, COL NGUYEN HUU KIEM. HAP HAS DISCOVERED THAT THE SITUATION IN THE PROVINCE IS WORSE THAN HE HAD EXPECTED, AND IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE STAFF HE HAS INHERITED. HE HAS NAMED A YOUNG CAPTAIN WHOM HE BROUGHT FROM DINH TUONG TO BE HIS DEPUTY. CONFIDENTIAL

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(C) A PHONG DINH PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARIZES THE MILITARY SITUATION SINCE CEASEFIRE I AS FOLLOWS: THERE HAVE BEEN ABOUT 400 VC-INITIATED INCIDENTS IN THE PROVINCE, COMPARED WITH 155 IN THE SAME PERIOD IN 1972. RECENTLY- CAPTURED VC DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS FROM THE FIELD CLEARLY INDICATE A VC STRATEGY AIMED AT WEARING DOWN THE RF, PF, AND PSDF THROUGH A CAMPAIGN OF SHELLINGS, HARASSMENTS, AND

OCCASIONAL GROUND ATTACKS. ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTHEAST PORTION OF THE PROVINCE, THE VC ARE ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH REST AND RECUPERATION, TRAINING, AND HOSPITAL CENTERS, AND TO SECURE INFILTRATION ROUTES TO CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE. FROM THE CEASEFIRE TO THE END OF JULY, 119 GVN TROOPS WERE KILLED IN THE PROVINCE, 290 WOUNDED, AND 22 ARE MISSING. THE GVN LOST SOME 129 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS, ONE CREW-SERVED WEAPON AND 11 RADIOS. THE VC REPORTEDLY LOST 139 KILLED AND THREE CAPTURED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO HOI CHANH SINCE THE CEASEFIRE.

3. MISCELLANEOUS: THE JULY 20 ASSASSINATION OF HOA HAO DIGNITARY HO THAI NGAN (CAN THO 0592) POINTS UP THE DISUNITY THAT CONTINUES TO PLAGUE THE ONCE POWERFUL RELIGIOUS SECT. MOST FEEL THAT A GANG OF HOA HAO BANDITS, CALLED THE GOLDEN CRAB AS WELL AS OTHER COLORFUL NAMES, DID THE MURDER. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORDERING THE ASSASSINATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN LAID AT THE DOOR OF A VARIETY OF FIGURES. SOME HAVE ACCUSED MINOR SA DEC HOA HAO WAR LORD LTC HIEU OF RESPONSIBILITY; OTHERS HOA HAO FACTION LEADER LE QUANG LIEM, AND STILL OTHERS LUONG TRONG TUONG, LIEM'S PRINCIPAL RIVAL AS TOP MAN IN THE HOA HAO RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION. AT ONE POINT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ASSASSINATION, CHAU DOC PROVINCE CHIEF COL NGUYEN DANG PHUONG, HIMSELF A HOA HAO, ORDERED MP'S TO DESCEND ON HOA HAO VILLAGE, WHICH SECT MEMBERS REVERE AS THEIR HOLY LAND, TO ROUND UP PERSONS BELONGING TO THE GANG THOUGHT TO HAVE COMMITTED THE MURDER. (COMMENT: TWO POINTS EMERGE FROM THIS IMBROGLIO. FIRST, HOA HAO LEADERS ARE AS BADLY AND ACRIMONIOUSLY SPLIT AS THEY HAVE EVER BEEN. SECOND, THE GOVERNMENT IS ABLE TO DEAL WITH HOA HAO INFRACTIONS OF THE PEACE AS THEY WOULD

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DEAL WITH THOSE PERPETRATED BY NON-HOA HAO--A STATE OF AFFAIRS THAT SOME YEARS AGO THE HOA HAO WOULD NOT HAVE HAD TO TOLERATE.)
LEHMAN UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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